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Teens Invited to Explore Downtown San José through Photography, Writing

San José Public Library takes Part in Statewide Summer Project

SAN JOSE, Calif—Children playing in an urban fountain...a coiled serpent in a downtown park. What images embody the community and experience of downtown San José to a youthful eye? San José Public Library young adult services librarians aim to find out when they conduct a 10-week project this summer, starting June 18, that will engage local teens in exploring and investigating their community using digital cameras, direct observation, and the resources of the library.

The project—*My World, My Community*—is part of a statewide program of the Humanities Council under its California Stories initiative *How I See It: My Place* that involves 21 California libraries. The libraries will use a curriculum specially developed by the Council and Council-donated equipment and materials, including digital cameras, a printer and a computer. As part of the program, the 10 – 15 teens at each library will curate an exhibit for the community and organize an opening event. In addition to the library exhibits, the teens' work will be featured in an online exhibit on the Council's website in spring 2009.

“We’re really excited about this opportunity to work with our city’s youth,” says Angie Miraflor, the project coordinator. “This project will enable teens to develop research, presentation, and leadership skills as well as learn about downtown San José in a creative and fun environment.”

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The project is expected to attract local teens, create stronger connections between young people and their communities, promote intergenerational understanding and civic engagement, and highlight the role of the library as a center of community cultural life.

Ralph Lewin, executive director of the California Council of the Humanities, explains further that the project is loosely based on the work of Harvard landscape historian John Stilgoe, who sees everyday landscape as a historical record and wants to awaken people to the excitement of exploring their surroundings. In addition to its observational intent, the program also aims to spark the young participants' interest in the humanities and encourage them to pursue their newly developed skills and interests through higher education and careers.

The culminating exhibit of local photographs and writing will be on view at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library this fall. For more information about the local project, or how teens can get involved in it, contact Angie Miraflor at howiseeitkinglibrary@gmail.com or by calling King Library Youth Services at (408) 808-2183. For more information about the Council's youth projects and its California Stories initiative, visit <http://www.californiastories.org/> and http://www.calhum.org/programs/HowISeeIt_overview.htm.

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